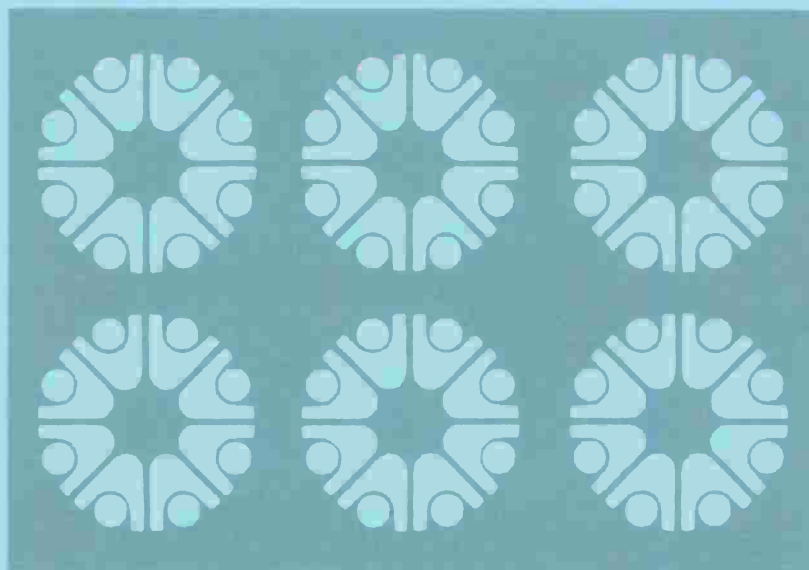
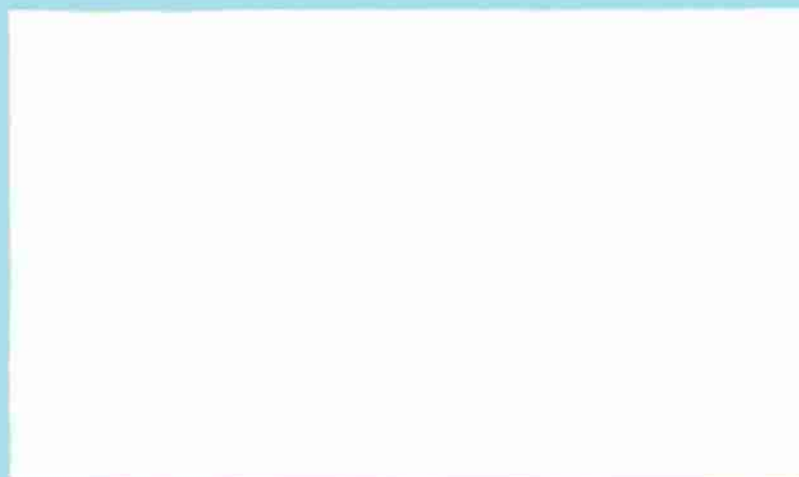


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Research Report



BATTELLE MEMORIAL INSTITUTE
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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98105

Technical Report #4
October 1974

Perceptions and Prescriptions
For Basic Training Among Enlisted Men
At Three Points In Their Navy Career

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Report of Work Accomplished Under Contract
N00014-73-C-0259

at

Battelle
Human Affairs Research Centers

Sponsored by

Organizational Effectiveness Research Programs
Psychological Sciences Division
Office of Naval Research

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER TR #4	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Perceptions and Prescriptions for Basic Training Among Enlisted Men at Three Points in Their Navy Career		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Technical Report
7. AUTHOR(s) William S. Maynard George C. Thornton III Stanley M. Nealey		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Battelle Memorial Institute Human Affairs Research Centers 4000 NE 41st Street, Seattle, WA 98105		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N00014-73-C-0259
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Organizational Effectiveness Research Program Office of Naval Research (Code 452) Arlington, VA 22217		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR 170-738
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE October 1974
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 23
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> Leader power Organizational climate Basic training Recruits </div> <div> Leadership Rank and authority Organizational expectations </div> </div>		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This report analyzes the perceptions of leadership in Navy boot camp from the perspectives of three groups of Navy enlisted men: raw recruits about to enter boot camp (N = 303); trainees nearing the end of boot camp (N = 365); and enlisted men with nearly two years of enlisted experience (N = 599). This study is part of a larger project dealing with interpersonal influence in the Navy which has explored perceptions of five leadership		

Abstract

climate dimensions and the frequency of use of five modes of interpersonal power.

In this study, all three groups of respondents had rather unfavorable impressions of the leadership climate in boot camp. Raw recruits expected boot camp to be less punitive, more considerate of individual feelings, and involving closer supervision than was reported by men in boot camp. Men who had approximately 18 months experience beyond boot camp held the most unfavorable perceptions of the leadership climate in boot camp.

The new recruits expected to find considerable expression of legitimate, expert, and coercive power in boot camp and preferred that less emphasis be placed on these sources of power. They expected to find little use of referent-based power, but preferred to see it expressed more. New recruit expectations and preferences were similar regarding the use of expert power.

Recruits in training reported a moderate usage of legitimate power--this frequency was comparable to what they preferred. They also reported that coercive power was used much more than was preferred, and referent power was expressed considerably less than preferred.

Comparison of new recruit perceptions with those of basic trainees revealed the following: new recruits overestimated the extent to which legitimate power would be emphasized (as reported by basic trainees); reward power was exercised considerably more than was anticipated by new recruits; and new recruits accurately estimated the frequency with which referent power would be used.

The use of a cross-sectional research design admittedly limits the strength of conclusion drawn, but the results tentatively suggest some specific ways in which the basic training experience impacts upon attitudes and values toward the leadership process.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes some aspects of leadership and interpersonal power in Navy boot camp as perceived by groups of enlisted men with differing amounts of time in the Navy. The results presented here are designed to help answer the following questions: What expectations and preferences concerning basic training do new recruits bring to the training situation? How do basic trainees who are finishing boot camp look upon the leadership process at basic? How do basic training graduates with fleet experience look back upon basic training? To those involved in the planning and supervision of basic training, such information may be useful in better understanding both the frames of reference which trainees bring to the training situation, and how these perspectives differ for men who have completed training and who have acquired subsequent military experience.

Research in civilian organizations suggests that individuals who have accurate and realistic expectations about the organizations they are joining are more likely to perform well (Schneider & Bartlett, 1969, 1970), and to be more satisfied with their work (Wanous, 1973). Further, the expectations which individuals hold when they join an organization, if not met during subsequent experience, may be prime causes for dissatisfaction and/or withdrawal from the organization (Porter & Steers, 1973).

The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions of leadership climate in basic training held by three groups of

Navy men: new recruits at AFEES centers prior to entering boot camp, basic trainees in their final week at the Naval Training Center, and men with eighteen months of Navy experience beyond basic training. In addition, the perceptions new recruits and basic trainees have of the actual use of leadership power during basic training are compared to what recruits and trainees think should be the use of leadership power in basic training.

METHOD

Sample. The respondents in this study were three samples of Navy enlisted men: (1) 303 Navy recruits at the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Stations (new recruits) at Los Angeles (N = 165) and Denver (N = 142); (2) 365 basic trainees at the Naval Training Center in San Diego (basic trainees); and (3) 599 experienced enlisted men at duty stations around the world with approximately eighteen months of Naval experience beyond basic training (experienced enlisted men). The new recruits had just joined the Navy and were being processed prior to departure for basic training. The basic trainees had completed seven or eight weeks of a nine-week basic training program. The questionnaires were administered to the first two samples under group conditions, returned anonymously to military personnel, and forwarded to the researchers for analysis. Men in the eighteen-month sample were identified from the master enlisted file of Navy personnel and were surveyed

by mail sent directly to each individual at his duty station. Respondents in the eighteen-month sample completed the questionnaires anonymously and mailed them directly to the researchers. Of the 1,700 questionnaires mailed out, 78 were returned unopened and 22 were returned after analyses began. From past experience in conducting mail surveys of such widespread Navy samples, it was estimated that approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of the questionnaires did not reach the intended subjects. Thus, the estimated effective response rate was approximately 50-60 percent. The new recruits and basic trainees samples were surveyed in the summer of 1972; the experienced enlisted men received their questionnaires in the spring of 1973.

Demographic characteristics, such as mean age, high school class ranking, and size of home town were found to be similar for all three groups of men with the exception of age comparisons as presented in Table 1. Age was not obtained from the eighteen-month enlisted men but it can be assumed they were approximately eighteen months older than the trainees. The eighteen-month sample came from slightly smaller home towns.

Questionnaire. The questionnaires administered to the new recruits, basic trainees, and experienced enlisted men on duty were parallel in form and content. The objective of the questionnaire was to measure perceptions of five organizational climate dimensions and five modes of expression of interpersonal influence or leadership power. In addition, a set of Likert-

type attitude items and biographical items were included.

The five organizational climate dimensions were: (1) hierarchical vs. equalitarian decision making, (2) formal vs. informal superior-subordinate relations, (3) supportive vs. punitive handling of mistakes by subordinates, (4) close vs. general supervision, and (5) considerate vs. inconsiderate supervision.

These five organizational climate dimensions were described by means of five pairs of contrasting situations. On each dimension the respondent used a five-point scale to describe (1) Navy basic training, (2) expectations (or descriptions) of Navy duty eighteen months after basic training, (3) civilian jobs, (4) the situation in which they would try hardest to do a good job, and (5) the situation in which they would be most satisfied. For the purposes of this report, only the responses to question one will be analyzed.

The five leadership power dimensions were those identified by French and Raven (1959): (1) legitimate power based on rank and position; (2) expert power based on knowledge; (3) reward power based on positive rewards; (4) referent power based on personal respect; and (5) coercive power based on negative sanctions and punishment.

Attitudes toward the five French and Raven modes of expression of interpersonal power were obtained by describing situations illustrating each mode of power expression. Respondents then indicated (1) how frequently each form of power

is used during basic training (or current duty), (2) how frequently they think each should be used, (3) how frequently each form of power is used in most civilian jobs, (4) how hard they would try to do a good job under each mode of power and (5) how satisfied they would feel.

For the purposes of this report, only the responses to questions one and two will be analyzed and presented. In the questionnaire mailed to the sample of experienced enlisted men, questions one and two asked respondents to focus on their current duty assignment rather than on basic training. Consequently, their responses to those questions are not reported here. Discussions of other phases of the project can be found in other reports (Nix, Thornton, & Nealey, 1974; Thornton, Hamilton & Nealey, 1973; Thornton & Nealey, 1974a and 1974b.)

In addition to the organizational climate and leadership power questions, respondents were presented 14 Likert-type items designed to probe general attitudes toward the military, basic training, the supervision process, and taking orders. Each item consisted of a statement with which the respondent indicated agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale. The items were grouped by a priori judgment into four dimensions. The items are shown in Table 5. Dimension A consists of four questions indicating how enthusiastic or "gung ho" men are toward basic training. Respondents scoring high on this dimension feel boot camp is important, necessary, a useful preparation for combat,

and should be rugged to enhance respect for the Navy. Dimension B consists of three questions designed to assess positive and successful reactions to boot camp. Respondents scoring high on this dimension try hard in basic training, feel they are doing well, and believe there is little chance of physical injury. Dimension C consists of four items having to do with good interpersonal relations as a prerequisite for effective cooperation, reactions to authoritativeness in order giving, and the need for officers to consider feelings in giving orders. High scores on this dimension indicate concern for good interpersonal relations. Dimension D consists of three items having to do with military control of off-duty behavior, the need to obey orders immediately, and the extent to which all orders are of equal importance. High scores on this dimension indicate acceptance of a "traditional" military role.

RESULTS

Leadership climate in basic training, as perceived by the three groups, is presented in Table 2. As an overview, all three groups of respondents had unfavorable impressions of the leadership displayed during basic training, i.e., undemocratic, formal, punitive, inconsiderate, and involving close supervision. Comparison of new recruit expectations with basic trainees' descriptions of leadership climate suggests that the new recruits accurately estimated the nature of decision-making processes and authority relationships: both groups saw very formal superior-subordinate relationships

and very little involvement of subordinates in decision making. On the other hand, new recruits expected boot camp leadership to be less punitive and more considerate of individuals' feelings than was actually experienced by basic trainees. Finally, new recruits expected much closer supervision than was reported by trainees. The enlisted men with eighteen months experience had unfavorable impressions of basic training, more unfavorable, in fact, than either new recruits or basic trainees.

Tables 3 and 4 present data on the frequency with which the five modes of interpersonal power were exercised in basic training. In Table 3, comparisons are made between (1) expected frequency of power use vs. how frequently power "should be used," as seen by new recruits, and (2) frequency of experienced power use vs. how frequently power "should be used," as described by basic trainees.

As the left side of Table 3 shows, new recruits expected to find much reliance on legitimate, expert, and coercive power, and felt that less emphasis should be placed on these three power modes. New recruits expected to find moderate use of referent power, but felt that it should be exercised more. Moderate amounts of reward power usage were both expected and preferred by these new recruits.

The data on the right side of Table 3 show that basic trainees reported moderate use of both legitimate and expert power and felt that basic training should be that way. They

felt there should be slightly less use of reward power. In agreement with the new recruits, they felt that referent power should be used a good deal more than it is. Finally, basic trainees felt there should be much less use of coercive power. On the whole, Table 3 shows that basic trainees found boot camp to involve too little referent power and too much coercive power, but otherwise to be reasonably close to their perception of what it should be. In fact, the discrepancy between what boot camp is and what it should be was smaller for basic trainees than for new recruits.

The data shown in Table 3 are rearranged in Table 4 to allow comparisons between new recruits and basic trainees with respect to their expectations-experiences and their preferences for leadership power expression. Comparisons shown on the left side of Table 4 indicate the extent to which recruits were able to accurately anticipate the use of leadership power in basic training. New recruits greatly overestimated the extent to which legitimate power would be emphasized. They also overestimated the use of expert power and underestimated the use of reward power. The moderate use of referent power described by basic trainees was correctly estimated by new recruits. Recruits also realistically expected frequent use of coercive power.

On the right side of Table 4, comparisons are made between recruit and basic trainee conceptions of how frequently each of the forms of power should be used in basic training.

Differences between the two groups may reflect the impact of basic training on changes in attitudes or values about leadership in boot camp since the basic trainees had already experienced boot camp when they completed the questionnaire. Compared to new recruits, basic trainees indicated that somewhat less emphasis should be placed on legitimate power and somewhat more emphasis on reward power. There were no significant differences between the two groups regarding the desired frequency of expert, referent, or coercive power. Both groups reported that moderate amounts of expert and referent power were appropriate in basic training. Both groups were also in agreement that coercive power should be exercised rather infrequently.

The data from the fourteen general attitude items for the groups are displayed in Table 5. Dimensions A and B bear directly on basic training (these data are also reported in a companion report in this series, Nix, et al., 1974) while Dimensions C and D provide wider perspective on the perceived importance of good interpersonal relations in the military and acceptance of a "traditional" military role. Inspection of the individual items is recommended.

The results for Dimension A show that the experienced enlisted men were significantly less enthusiastic about basic training than either new recruits or the current trainees in basic training. Experienced enlisted men were particularly critical of the statements that basic training is an essential

preparation for combat and that respect for the service is enhanced by a rugged boot camp experience. These negative judgments seem not to result from any particular difficulty these experienced Navy men had with basic training since the scores on Item 2 of Dimension B show they recalled having had few serious problems with basic training.

The attitudes displayed in Dimension C indicate that the experienced enlisted men are markedly more concerned with good interpersonal relations than are either new recruits or basic trainees. Finally, Dimension D shows that basic trainees are far more accepting of the traditional military role (the service should control off-duty behavior, orders are to be obeyed immediately, and all orders are equally important) than either new recruits or the experienced enlisted men. It is some measure of the success of basic training that these traditional values are at a high during the boot camp experience. However, some combination of reflection on boot camp and experience on Navy duty leaves the experienced Navy enlisted man even less accepting of the traditional military role than is the new recruit with no military experience.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are subject to various interpretations when one thinks of possible implications for the conduct of basic training. Table 4 shows that new recruits have several

misconceptions about what basic training will be like. This finding is the main point of the Nix, et al., (1974) report. Previous research (Wanous, 1973) has shown that organizational members are more satisfied and more likely to remain in the organization if their expectations of what the organization will provide are met. Table 3 shows that new recruits approach basic training with the belief that leadership power should be used quite differently than they expect to be the case. Table 3 also shows that near the conclusion of boot camp basic trainees feel the use of leadership power should be changed. Both groups were particularly strong in recommending reduced use of coercive power. Implications for action can be of two sorts: (1) provide more realistic information to prospective recruits about what to expect in boot camp, or (2) seek to bring about changes in boot camp to bring it closer to the expectations and recommendations of new recruits.

On the other hand, the real function of boot camp is to provide a useful orientation to the Navy and to provide training that will help prepare the recruit for Navy duty. In this sense, what the new recruit or basic trainee thinks about boot camp or what he thinks boot camp "should be" may be largely irrelevant. The real question is, does it get the job done? Unfortunately, the answers from experienced enlisted men indicate that basic training may not be adequately fulfilling its function of preparing enlisted men for Navy duty. Table 2 shows that the experienced enlisted men were

the most negative of the three groups in describing the leadership climate typical of basic training. Comparing these data to those from companion reports (Nealey & Thornton, 1974, and Nix, et al., 1974) shows that these experienced enlisted men described leadership climate typical of their current Navy duty in much more favorable terms than they did boot camp. While this is no great surprise it is still striking since orientation and training on many, if not most, civilian jobs is an experience characterized by very positive attitudes and is generally looked back upon later as useful experience. This seems not to be the case with Navy basic training, as Table 5 shows. Experienced enlisted men largely rejected the values they were taught at boot camp, denying that it was an important part of military training, that it was important preparation for combat, or that a rugged boot camp experience was a necessary ingredient of respect for the service. Instead, they indicated that good interpersonal relations are important to them, that they must like superiors to work well for them, that they lose respect when orders are given just to show authority, and that immediate compliance with every order isn't as important as was taught at boot camp.

On the whole, the data of this report and others in this series present a strong case for considering changes in the leadership climate and mode of leadership power displayed during basic training in the Navy.

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Table 1
Demographic Variables for Three Samples of Navy Recruits

Variables	New recruits		Basic trainees		Experienced enlisted men	
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.
Age (months) ¹	228	14.8	230	16.3		
Population of Home Town ²	3.46	1.72	3.32	1.57	3.02	1.70
High School Class Standing ³	2.85	.80	2.86	.74	2.98	.79
N in sample	303		365		599	

¹Age not obtained from experienced enlisted men

²1 = Less than 5,000

2 = 5,000 - 10,000

3 = 10,000 - 30,000

4 = 30,000 - 100,000

5 = 100,000 - 1,000,000

6 = Over 1,000,000

³1 = Bottom 25 percent

2 = Below average but not in bottom 25 percent

3 = Above average but not in top 25 percent

4 = Top 25 percent

Table 2
Perceptions of Organizational Climate
in Basic Training at
Three Points in Military Career

Climate Dimensions		New ¹ Recruits (N = 303) (1)	Basic ² Trainees (N = 365) (2)	Experienced ³ Enlisted Men (N = 599) (3)	F
Decision-Making: Hierarchical (1) vs. Democractic (5)	\bar{X} S.D.	1.96 (1.23)	2.00 (1.20)	1.32 (.78)	.001 1=2>3
Authority Structure: Formal (1) vs. Informal (5)	\bar{X} S.D.	1.42 (.96)	1.35 (.84)	1.14 (.58)	.001 1=2>3
Performance Evaluation: Punitive (1) Permissive (5)	\bar{X} S.D.	2.72 (1.61)	2.14 (1.53)	1.90 (1.46)	.001 1>2=3
Supervision: Close (1) vs. General (5)	\bar{X} S.D.	1.84 (1.21)	2.37 (1.42)	1.45 (.94)	.001 3<1<2
Leadership: Inconsiderate (1) vs. Considerate (5)	\bar{X} S.D.	2.79 (1.53)	2.45 (1.49)	1.85 (1.27)	.001 1>2>3

¹Expectation of basic training

²Experience in basic training

³Reflection on basic training

Table 3

Comparison of Expected (Experienced) Frequency of Leadership
Modes with Preferences for Leadership Modes:
New Recruits and Basic Trainees

Leadership Power Modes	New Recruits (N = 303)		<u>t</u>	Basic Trainees (N = 365)		<u>t</u>
	Expected Frequency	How Fre- quently "Should be Used"		Experi- enced Fre- quency	How Fre- quently "Should be Used"	
Legitimate ¹	4.16 ² (1.01)	3.21 (1.15)	11.69***	2.93 (1.50)	2.74 (1.23)	1.95
Expert	3.86 (1.16)	3.43 (1.10)	5.18***	3.32 (1.40)	3.36 (1.30)	-.48
Reward	2.73 (1.40)	2.78 (1.19)	.60	3.40 (1.44)	3.20 (1.33)	2.35*
Referent	2.82 (1.32)	3.19 (1.11)	-3.81***	2.78 (1.53)	3.30 (1.35)	-6.29***
Coercive	3.84 (1.30)	2.55 (1.25)	12.84***	3.72 (1.45)	2.47 (1.35)	12.72***

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

¹For all powers: 1 = seldom, 5 = frequent use

²Mean value; standard deviation in parentheses

Table 4

Comparison of New Recruits and Basic Trainees'
Perceptions of Power Mode Usage:
Expectations (Descriptions) and Preferences

Leadership Power Modes	Expected Frequency New Recruits ¹ (N = 303)	Experienced Frequency Basic Trainees ² (N = 365)	<u>t</u>	How Basic Training "Should Be"		<u>t</u>
				New Recruits (N = 303)	Basic Trainees (N = 365)	
Legitimate ³	4.16 ⁴ (1.01)	2.93 (1.50)	12.60***	3.21 (1.15)	2.74 (1.23)	5.11***
Expert	3.86 (1.16)	3.32 (1.40)	5.45***	3.43 (1.10)	3.36 (1.30)	.77
Reward	2.73 (1.40)	3.40 (1.44)	-6.08***	2.78 (1.19)	3.20 (1.33)	-4.32***
Referent	2.82 (1.32)	2.78 (1.53)	.36	3.19 (1.11)	3.30 (1.35)	-1.15
Coercive	3.84 (1.30)	3.72 (1.45)	1.13	2.55 (1.25)	2.47 (1.35)	.80

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

¹Expected frequency during basic training

²Experienced frequency during basic training

³For all powers: 1 = seldom, 5 = frequent use

⁴Mean value; standard deviation in parentheses

Table 5
Mean Responses of the Three Groups to General
Attitude Items Grouped into Four Dimensions

Dimension A Items	Position in Navy			F
	New Recruits (1)	Basic Trainees (2)	Experienced Enlisted Men (3)	
1. I believe basic training is a very important part of military training.	4.24 ¹	4.04	3.49***	
2. Basic training is mostly a lot of unnecessary things you have to go through to be "initiated." (reverse scoring)	2.68	2.78	2.65 NS	
3. If I'm ever in combat, the things I've learned in basic training will be very essential.	3.94	3.40	2.95***	
4. Without a rugged boot camp experience, recruits will have no respect for the service.	3.22	3.42	2.67***	
Dimension Mean	3.43	3.41	2.93***	64.56 1=2>3
<u>Dimension B Items</u>				
1. It's important to me to do well in basic training.	4.50	4.32	3.72***	
2. I am making it through basic training without any serious problems.	4.07	4.07	4.21**	
3. There is a good chance of being accidentally injured during basic training. (reverse scoring)	3.47	2.75	3.38***	
Dimension Mean	3.90	3.71	3.76**	6.40 1=2>3
<u>Dimension C Items</u>				
1. If I don't like a supervisor, I can't work for him.	2.50	2.25	3.00***	
2. People who don't like each other can't do a good job together.	3.43	4.51	3.50***	
3. If a supervisor gives me an order just to show his authority, I lose all respect for him.	3.15	3.87	3.92***	
4. In making decisions, officers have to consider the feelings of their men.	3.80	3.93	4.00**	
Dimension Mean	3.23	3.64	3.60***	35.82 1<2=3
<u>Dimension D Items</u>				
1. Off-duty behavior of enlisted men should not be subject to military discipline. (reverse scoring)	2.98	2.80	2.60***	
2. When an order is received, the first and only thought should be immediate compliance.	3.82	4.00	3.05***	
3. It is more important to follow orders in combat than in noncombat situations. (reverse scoring)	2.91	3.80	2.42***	
Dimension Mean	2.93	3.53	2.68***	152.21 2>1>3

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

¹Mean value: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree

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